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INFO RUCNNAF/NORTH AF NEA AND SOUTH ASIAN COLLECTIVE

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SISSON, GRANT, LENZEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: DAMASCUS MEDIA REACTION, OCTOBER 31, 2008

News Summary

¶1. Only government-owned daily al-Thawrah was published on Friday October 31. al-Thawrah gave pride of place to strident coverage of the alleged U.S. raid in Abu al-Kamal. The top half of its front page reported on the protest march organized by the Syrian government on October 30 in downtown Damascus and a condolence visit by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, on behalf of President Assad, to families of the victims in AlbuKamal. The article was accompanied by a huge photograph of the demonstration. Pages 2-3 were fully devoted to coverage of the demonstration and messages received from regional and international groups and leaders condemning the attack.

Key Headlines:

--"Damascus rejects - in a popular march...and the world continues to condemn the American aggression; With President Assad's authorization, condolences to the families of the victims" (front page)

--"A crime against humanity whose perpetrators must be held accountable" (p. 2)

--"[The attack] reflects the bankruptcy of the American Administration and its political defeat: Arab and international condemnation continues" (p. 3)

Editorials

¶1. "Perpetual Fumbling:" (op-ed by columnist Mustafa al-Miqdad)

"The Bush Administration once again has confirmed the loss of its [moral] compass in its political, military, intelligence, and strategic calculations. It chose to launch the aggressive attack on civilians working near the border under the pretext of anticipating a confrontation with 'terrorists'...."

"The current Bush Administration is in a perpetual crisis which is still providing reasons for it to continue to pursue a policy of murder and criminality under the pretext of combating the 'terrorism' hidden in the Islamic world, according to its superstitious beliefs.

"The occupation and the Bush Administration, threatened by the loss of the Republican seat in the White House, are practicing a war of psychology and distortion against the American people a few days before the presidential elections in an attempt to implant its idea of pursuing terrorism in all corners of the world and of carrying out preemptive strikes...

"The Syrian response came with clear indications and I believe that more responses are still in the Syrian basket. There is no doubt

that it is able to uncover the falsehood of the American allegations and the [U.S.] Administration's fumbling, as a great power, in taking an effective international role."

12. "Towards a balanced American policy" (op-ed by Mundhir Eid)

"The criminal operation which the American forces carried out in the bombing of the city of Albukamal and the violation of Syrian sovereignty are a clear sign of the criminal mentality of Bush and his bloody planners, which began with the occupation of Iraq and which he wishes to finish with terrorism and blood.

"It's clear that Bush can't hide his wrath and hatred towards Syrian which was always an obstacle to his colonialist plans in the region. Likewise, his 'mind' can't absorb the European opening towards [Syria] and the proof that it is a hard number in solving the region's problems. The response was with a rash and aggressive policy embodied by a wicked crime. There is no doubt that the goal of the aggression on Albukamal was not, as Washington claims, the pursuit of al-Qaeda elements...but rather the state of stability in the region, in which Syria plays a clear and fundamental role...

"Eight days till the end of the Bush term and his departure from the White House, and they are long days with a neurotic person who can take the decision to launch wars and sedition all over the world. Here the responsibility falls to the minds in the US to hasten to reject his policy which has brought them devastation and destruction...."

CONNELLY